

Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program Overview

PART 1

WHAT IS THE ARTHRITIS FOUNDATION EXERCISE PROGRAM?

The Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program is a community-based, non-clinical group exercise program designed to help those who have joint and/or muscle problems achieve improved joint mobility, muscle strength and endurance in order to improve the performance of their daily activities.

This program, offered by certified instructors in partnership with their local Arthritis Foundation chapter, is offered 2-3 times a week for 8 weeks or can be offered as an ongoing class. The program consists of 4 main elements:

1. **Exercise**—including stretching or range of motion exercises, strengthening exercises and endurance routines.
2. **Health Education**—providing up to date information about arthritis self-management and exercise.
3. **Movement Activities**—to promote social interaction, movement, balance and body awareness.
4. **Relaxation Exercises**—to introduce and practice various stress management techniques which are helpful for stress and pain reduction.

History

In 1986, the Arthritis Foundation identified the need for a comprehensive exercise program, including a variety of different exercises to accommodate people with varying degrees of joint involvement. A grant was received from the Coca Cola Foundation to help support the program development and pilot testing. The first instructor's training workshop was held in September 1986, in Atlanta, Georgia. A pilot test was conducted with nine classes in Georgia and in Dallas, Texas. Subsequently, the program underwent additional testing and modification and was officially launched in 1987 as the People with Arthritis Can Exercise (or PACE) program. The program was updated in 1993, 1999 and 2005.

Effective September 2005, the program was re-named the Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program. The name change resulted from consumer research that showed that fewer than 1% of people with arthritis are reached by Arthritis Foundation programs and public awareness of Arthritis Foundation programs is very low. Marketing research confirmed the need for a consumer-friendly name branded to increase recognition of the Arthritis Foundation. The theme that "people with arthritis can exercise" is included in the supporting copy of the new program marketing materials.